

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T BEIRUT 1873

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR PBOF PEPR LE IS XF
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: DISCUSSION WITH KAMAL AL-ASSAD

1. PRESIDENT OF CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES KAMAL AL-ASSAD ASKED ME TO CALL ON HIM APRIL 4. HE WANTED TO DISCUSS MESSAGE HE HAD SENT TO WALDHEIM ASKING THAT UNIFIL BE CONVERTED INTO STRIKING FORCE. FONMIN BOUTROS ON LEARNING THAT I WAS GOING TO SEE ASSAD ASKED ME TO TRY TO DISSUADE HIM FROM IDEA THAT HIS SUGGESTION WAS PRACTICAL.

2. ASSAD MESSAGE TO ME WAS THAT IF UNIFIL DID NOT TAKE ACTIVE ROLE AND ASSERT ITS AUTHORITY OVER ALL STRATEGIC LOCALITIES IN SOUTH LEBANON, INCLUDING TYRE AND NABATIYAH, IT WOULD BE FAILURE AND THIS WOULD REFLECT ON U.S. AND UN AS WELL AS BEING TRAGEDY FOR LEBANON. HE HAD JUST SPOKEN TO NORWEGIAN AMBASSADOR WHO HAD TOLD HIM NORWEGIANS HAD ONLY DEFENSIVE WEAPONS AND COULD NOT TAKE ROLE HE HAD IN MIND. IF THAT IS THE CASE, WHATEVER OUR INTENTIONS,

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 01873 041500Z

THERE WOULD BE NO LASTING RESULTS FROM UNIFIL. COMPOSITION OF FORCE SHOULD ALSO BE CHANGED TO INCLUDE OTHER MEMBERS OF SECURITY COUNCIL AS WELL AS FRENCH. LET THE BRITISH AND AMERICANS COME TOO.

3. I SAID THAT IT WAS UNUSUAL FOR PERMANENT MEMBERS OF SECURITY COUNCIL TO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH A PEACEKEEPING

MISSION AND WERE AMERICANS TO BE INVOLVED IT WOULD RAISE A NUMBER OF COMPLICATIONS ONE OF WHICH WOULD PROBABLY BE SOVIET DEMAND TO BE INCLUDED. ASSAD SAID THE MORE THE MERRIER. I REPLIED THAT GIVEN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SOVIETS AND PLO I THOUGHT THEIR ROLE WOULD PROBABLY BE VERY DESTRUCTIVE. ASSAD DISAGREED AND SAID HE THOUGHT SOVIETS WOULD BE OBLIGED TO ACT IN MORE MODERATE FASHION IF THEY HAD RESPONSIBILITIES. WE LEFT IT THERE.

4. I SAID ROLE OF UNIFIL WAS SOMETHING TO BE DECIDED IN FINAL ANALYSIS BY UN ITSELF. SECRETARY GENERAL'S MEMORANDUM ON SUBJECT SETTING FORTH HOW HE ENVISAGED FORCE OPERATING AND THE TWO RESOLUTIONS ON THE SUBJECT WERE PHRASED IN RATHER GENERAL TERMS. LIMITS OF AREA IN WHICH UNIFIL WAS TO OPERATE WERE NOT SET; IT WAS TO HELP LEBANESE GOVERNMENT REASSERT ITS SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE AREA AND IT WAS TO CONTROL MOVEMENT. THE TERM "CONTROLLING MOVEMENT" WAS GENERALLY INTERPRETED TO MEAN TO PREVENT MOVEMENT INTO AREA OF ILLEGALLY ARMED PERSONS.

5. JUST HOW THIS MANDATE WOULD DEVELOP IN PRACTICE WOULD REMAIN TO BE SEEN. THE FIRST THING WAS TO GET UNIFIL ON THE GROUND AND ESTABLISHED. ONCE THAT HAD HAPPENED AND ISRAELIS HAD WITHDRAWN PERHAPS SOMETHING COULD BE WORKED OUT WITH REGARD TO SUCH PLACES AS NABATIYAH
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 01873 041500Z

AND TYRE. SINE QUA NON, HOWEVER, WOULD BE THE PRESENCE OF THE LEBANESE ARMY ALONGSIDE UNIFIL. WE WERE CONFIDENT THE ISRAELIS WERE GOING TO WITHDRAW AND ONCE THEIR TIME-TABLE HAD BEEN ANNOUNCED THAT MIGHT HELP EASE THE SITUATION IN THE AREA.

6. ASSAD SAID HE THOUGHT ISRAELIS WOULD SEEK PRETEXT FOR REMAINING IN AREA AND DID NOT SEE HOW THEY COULD WITHDRAW LEAVING THEMSELVES EXPOSED TO FIRING FROM BEAUFORT. WHAT HE WANTED WAS FOR UNIFIL TO BE IN POSITION TO TELL PALESTINIANS TO GET OUT OF BEAUFORT AND OTHER PLACES OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE. I AGREED THAT BEAUFORT WAS A PROBLEM BUT SAID THAT PERHAPS SIILASVUO WOULD BE ABLE TO WORK SOMETHING OUT.

7. ASSAD NOTED THAT STATIONING LEBANESE ARMY IN SOUTH POSED SOME DIFFICULT PROBLEMS. LEBANESE WERE AFRAID IT WOULD BE CAUGHT BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS. DID I NOT THINK THIS WAS A REAL DANGER? I SAID CERTAINLY THERE WAS SUCH A DANGER BUT, AFTER ALL, UNIFIL WAS GOING TO BE EXPOSED TO IT AND LEBANESE COULD NOT EXPECT THEM TO BE FIRM IF LEBANESE ARMY WAS NOT

SHARING THE DANGER WITH THEM.

PARKER

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